

**2014 MassAIMH: Birth to Six Fall Launch Event**  
**Opening Remarks**

**Good Morning, I am Dorothy Richardson, President of the MassAIMH, Birth to Six, Board of Directors.** On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank *Peggy Kaufman, Kate Weldon LeBlanc, Deborah Walker, and Lizzie McEnany* of Jewish Family & Children's Services for their incredibly generous contribution of their space, administrative support, parking and van support, and coffee and tea for our gathering today. I'm thrilled that the Fellows and Faculty of the Infant Parent Training Institute have also joined us today.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors (*please stand*) for their tireless devotion to our mission, all deeply engaged professionals who work on a completely volunteer basis. They even baked for us today! Please enjoy some refreshments at any time throughout the morning.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to welcome all of YOU: over 180 interdisciplinary professionals; representing *over* 85 separate public and private agencies, higher education sites, and early childhood programs across the state (and even a few from neighboring states of Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Maine)!!

Just as we champion the importance of interpersonal connection in development, we are here to support the connections between all of you and the vital work that you do to support children and families.

MassAIMH's Mission: is to promote family, infant, and early childhood social and emotional well-being as *foundational to development* by **enhancing and linking** 1) specialized training, 2) research, 3) policy, 4) advocacy, and 5) preventive and therapeutic intervention through collaboration across systems, disciplines, and providers.

Now I will tell you a bit about OUR HISTORY: 10 years ago, we gathered as a group of like-minded professionals to foster awareness and interconnections of our work with infants, young children, and their families and decided to form a coalition. It took us years, in an informal and collegial setting, meeting six times a year, to define and craft our current mission statement, under the leadership of Dr. Gerald Stechler, who passed away this past year. Gerry was a pioneer in the field of infant mental health. We will be exploring ways to commemorate his invaluable contributions to the field and to our organization in the coming year.

Under the skillful leadership of Dr. Jayne Singer, our first formal board president, our organization has become a true entity. Five years ago, we voted to become a chapter of the World Association of Infant Mental Health, joining 26 other states and 33 countries and coalitions of countries with chapters of WAIMH. We began the arduous path of becoming a

501(c)(3) non-profit organization: adopting our current name, Massachusetts Association of Infant Mental Health, Birth to Six, Incorporated; “MassAIMH” for short.

These significant, yet arduous, developmental “root-growing” endeavors have sent forth green shoots as we have undertaken several critical tasks in Linkages and Advocacy:

- Contributing feedback and important language on behalf of IMH in the 2008 MA Children’s Mental Health Bill.
- MassAIMH endorsement in principle of Mass. House Bill 3897 (An Act Relative to Post-Partum Depression)
- Letter of support for Mass. Executive Office of Health and Human Services proposal to SAMHSA for implementing a Systems of Care for children birth to five, in partnership with Boston’s Thrive in Five and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley.
- Letter to the American Psychiatric Association during their deliberations in the creation of the new DSM-V, to include appropriate diagnostic criterion for infants and young children (unfortunately, to no avail); and we continue to persevere in finding avenues to create a crosswalk between the DSM and DC:0-3R.
- We have reached out to other groups within the state with similar missions and created new partnerships with the ECMH Workgroup and BIDIP. We have reached out to other state WAIMH affiliates and explored opportunities for collaboration, particularly in New England.
- We have collaborated with state-wide efforts to create databases for families looking for I/ECMH service providers and to connect providers with the multitude of rich training opportunities in our state (some of these meta-databases are currently listed as links on [our website](#)).
- Our organization of professionals with expertise in a range of infant and early childhood mental health diagnosis and treatment has provided technical assistance on evidence-based dyadic parent-infant interventions.
- We have plans for pursuing collaborative relationships with other health and human service organizations as possible training affiliates, for co-sponsoring or co-directing professional development conferences, workshops, and other teaching opportunities (e.g., UMass Boston Infant Parent Mental Health Fellowship Program; JF&CS Infant Parent Training Institute; Connected Beginnings and Brazelton Touchpoints Organization, to name a few).
- And currently, a very important and pressing mission area is in the development of a partnership with multiple state agencies to bring Endorsement criterion for Infant Mental Health providers (credentialing professionals of every discipline, at every level of training) to Massachusetts. We call upon you today to help us in these important missions.

Over this past decade, we have engaged in a developmental process, not just in creating Linkages amongst professionals, but also, as you can see, in some initial forays in Advocacy. So why do we call this a “Launch Event”? We have passed through an early developmental phase of our organization, creating “Roots and Shoots”, *if you will*, building the all-important infrastructure and developing cross-agency coalitions to support our next phase of growth: Branches!

Our website is our first such branch!

With the tremendous support of Ellie Boynton of [Garnet Solutions](#), whose pro-bono work has enabled us to create our beautiful website: [www.MassAIMH.org](http://www.MassAIMH.org). *Please take one of her cards before you leave; she is an incredible business organizer/ planner/web developer and manager.*

Our website is brand new; AND it is a work in progress. It is not truly **fruit** yet. We rely on all of your intellectual support to help us find and report on the connections of what is going on in the state and to help us by providing important content.

Finally, we rely on your financial support through membership, so that we may have the financial means to grow our branches substantially, so that they are far reaching.

Specifically, we need support to help us build and update our website. Further, we are working to create a business plan to oversee our efforts in the endorsement process and garnering the financial support of private foundations, so that we may hire an administrative staff to fortify and multiply our efforts.

So we ask three things of you today: first and foremost, that you be inspired by our speakers, and by your colleagues surrounding you. Know that you are not alone in your important work with the most vulnerable of our society. Secondly, that you become a member of MassAIMH: When you [JOIN TODAY](#), your 2014 membership fee of \$65 will cover you through December of 2015. Please take two minutes to fill out the form and hand in to one of our helpers on your way to your breakout group. Please encourage your colleagues who could not attend today to join us on our website!

And thirdly, we want you to share your knowledge, expertise, and your hopes and ideas for the future of our organization: We have asked you on a handout to share with us:

- i. “What are the burning issues and areas of need that MassAIMH should consider?”
- ii. “What ideas and opportunities for action should MassAIMH take?” and
- iii. “What networks and connections would facilitate our work on these issues?”

Our goal is to LEARN ABOUT YOU and *your* important work and to help us to be connected to those who support our collective mission. Together, we can build our web of interconnections to advance the cause of IMH in the Commonwealth.

**Introducing Speakers:** And NOW, I have the great privilege of introducing our two keynote speakers, a dynamic duet of infant mental health champions.

First, our Soprano: **Dr. Jayne Singer** is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

For over two decades, Dr. Singer has championed Infant-Parent Mental Health Intervention at Children's Hospital where she is the Clinical Director of the Child and Parent Program in the *Developmental Medicine Center*. There, I was very fortunate to have her as my clinical supervisor.

Dr. Singer joined the faculty at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) in 1999; a continuation of her clinical work with Dr. Brazelton since 1989. At BTC, she leads the Early Care and Education Initiative and has developed adaptations of the Touchpoints Approach for families living with children with Special Needs. In addition to collaborating on the development and implementation of curricula for the general professional development programs of the BTC, Dr. Singer also creates and facilitates workshops on Reflective Practice, Mentorship, and Supervision as they relate to the Touchpoints Approach. And I have already shared with you how she has championed our organization and fortified our roots.

Now for the Baritone of our duet:

**Dr. Berry Brazelton**, who deserves the title "Human Being Extraordinaire." He is one of the warmest, sharpest human beings I know. He is deeply responsible for our field and how it has developed; helping to bring our awareness to the capacities of infants and young children, at a time in our history when they were not thought to have their own minds. Together with his many colleagues, Dr. Brazelton has been a *tour de force*, paving the way for *all of us*. Integrating clinical practice, research, training and policy work, Dr. Brazelton has been for the past half century, a MassAIMH unto himself! He has written over 30 books and hundreds of articles; influenced key national policy decisions involving young children and families; and creating an innovative treatment and research center, The Child Development Unit and later the Brazelton Touchpoints Institute. He has received numerous awards and distinctions for his work. And last year, at 95, he received the Presidential Citizens Medal, the nation's second highest civilian honor.

Dr. Brazelton, for your generous endorsement of MassAIMH and our important mission, we offer our deepest gratitude.

#### **BREAKOUT GROUPS:**

You are invited to move your chairs to a committee of your choice: In your handout, you will see the mission statements printed for each committee. We have identified three key questions and we need your input; please share in committee as time permits and we will spend some time

at the end of the morning hearing from each group. Please ALSO fill out this form to give us your individual feedback (turn into your group leader).

Closing Remarks:

We hope that you will join us. We need your financial support through membership and your intellectual support through engaging on our committees and keeping us informed. Together we can work to enhance the social emotional well-being of our youngest citizens and their families.